

OFFICE OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION
STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

JUNE 23, 2009
1:15 PM

VETERANS' MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM
5825 FLORIDA BOULEVARD
BATON ROUGE, LA 70806

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The regular monthly Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Guillory at 1:15 P.M.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Laura Edwards.

Members present: Chairman George Guillory, Ernest Girouard, Ed Yerger, Garland Colvin, Thomas Vitrano, and Randell Fletcher

Members absent: None

A quorum was present.

Others present: Kevin Norton, NRCS; Dwight Landreneau, LSU; Brad Spicer, LDAF; Joey Breaux, LDAF; Butch Stegall, LDAF and Laura Edwards, LDAF

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chairman Guillory called for a motion to approve the minutes of the May 26, 2009, State Commission meeting.

Motion: Mr. Fletcher made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 26, 2009 Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Yerger and passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chairman Guillory said they would next take up Unfinished Business and requested Mr. Spicer to report on the items listed on the agenda.

SWCD Farm Bill Implementation Report

Mr. Spicer said all districts are on target in regards to carrying out their farm bill work. He said he sent a response letter to Mr. Hollier in the St. Landry SWCD explaining the reason for the large reduction in the district's Farm Bill funding under the current cooperative agreement.

Mr. Spicer said the districts Farm Bill invoices for March, April, May and June have not been paid. He said all payments have been processed and as soon as the department budget shortfall is resolved, Farm Bill payments will be made to the districts.

District Audits

Mr. Spicer said the next item on the agenda is FY 2008-2009 and FY 2009-2010 district audits. He said that he, Joey Breaux and Bennie Tate met with the district secretaries in Woodworth June 10-11, 2009 and that Mr. Tate went over the new format that the districts will use to complete their financial statements needed for their audit. He said they also review the revised Operating Budget format. He said he has also advised the districts that they need to let the OSWC know by June 26, 2009 if they intend to use Mr. Krielow's CPA firm to do their annual compilation. He said Mr. Krielow said that he would do the district compilation for the same amount as last year providing most of the districts would use his firm. Mr. Spicer said that each district will be responsible for the costs associated with their FY 2008-2009 audits.

NACD Regional meeting – August 12-14, 2009

Chairman Guillory asked Dr. Girouard for his comments on the upcoming NACD Regional meeting to be held in Baton Rouge. Dr. Girouard said the meeting agenda has not been finalized, but a draft program shows the registration to begin Wednesday, August 12th at 10:00 AM with the Opening Session starting at 1:00 and ending at 5:00 PM; then a social from 5:30 – 7:00 PM. He said they are trying to plan all of the events so the participants can stay at the meeting site except for the tour on Thursday afternoon, August 13. He said that Thursday 8:30 – Noon the meeting will continue with a presentation on Carbon Sequestration, and alternative fuels for the 21st century and other topics. Dr. Girouard said a tour of the Port of Greater Baton Rouge and White Castle Sugar Mill are planned for 1:00 – 5:00 PM followed by a reception from 5:30-6:30 PM and then a Cajun meal and entertainment from 6:30 – 8:30 PM. He said Friday morning will include a two hour general session followed by an NACD south Central business meeting and state meetings.

Chairman Guillory asked if the Auxiliary had any planned events for the women and Dr. Girouard said not at this time, but they could possibly do a tour somewhere close to the hotel. Mr. Landreneau said the LSU GREEN HOUSE would be available and they could provide a free tour explaining better home building practices, water conservation, gardening, and other related activities. Dr. Girouard said they are looking at the possibility of having a poster exhibit on energy, carbon sequestration and cap and trade legislation.

Mr. Spicer said they are focusing this year on private industrial and other non-agency views concerning the future energy needs and issues. He said the hotel room rate is \$99 per night and the deadline for making room reservations is July 20.

NACD Legislative Conference – July 19-21, 2009

Mr. Spicer said that he, Dr. Girouard, Mr. Bruce Fraizer, Mr. John Compton and Mr. Kevin Norton will be attending the NACD Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. July 19 through July 22, 2009. Dr. Girouard said the only meeting confirmation they had was with Congressman Boustany. Mr. Spicer said they have contacted all nine congressional offices requesting meetings on the 21st of July.

NEW BUSINESS

NRCS State Conservationist Report

Chairman Guillory asked Mr. Norton to give the NRCS State Conservationist Report. Mr. Norton handed out copies of his printed report and said that the NRCS and the LSU Ag Center are working together to help farmers by offering the use of a pumping plant and irrigation efficiency evaluation unit. He said this mobile unit will help producers determine the efficiency of their power sources using a flow meter to measure fuel consumption for diesel, natural gas or electric pumping systems in relation to pumping rate, or irrigation outputs. Mr. Norton said that data collected from this unit will assist landowners in improving their irrigation efficiency, potentially saving energy and reducing the cost per unit of irrigation water pumped. He said the unit has already been used to evaluate twelve wells and two surface water pumps in southwest Louisiana, and twelve wells in northeast Louisiana. He said that as soon as evaluation of data and results from the Fiscal Year 2009 pilot pumping plant efficiency program is complete, plans for next fiscal year's program will be announced. Mr. Norton said that a national engineer reviewing this data commented that, based on the data collected on diesel pumps, and in comparison with other data collected nationally, very roughly up to 45 million gallons of diesel may be saved (nationwide) annually by implementing recommendations derived from the use of irrigation and pump efficiency units such as this. He said that this will lead to major opportunities for conservation of a critical natural resource, for energy conservation and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, as well as providing reduced runoff, aquifer conservation, better use of water delivered to the field, reduction in nonpoint source contributions of phosphorus, nitrogen and sediments from agricultural lands.

Mr. Norton said that due in part to many personnel changes in coastal field offices, a two-day Marsh Conservation Planning workshop was recently conducted on the Chitimacha Indian Reservation in Charenton, LA. He said that coastal field office staff were trained on various aspects of coastal marsh conservation planning, such as planning assistance, plan review, inter-agency consultation, landowner relations, vegetative type mapping, soils identification, salinity testing, engineering and more.

Mr. Norton said that more than \$20 million in EWP applications have been received in the past year, and to this end, two Floodplain easement applications have been selected for funding through the Recovery Act of 2009. The two easements will encompass 710 acres in Richland Parish and 341 acres in Tensas Parish. He said that for an investment of \$1,798,528, about 300,000 hardwood tree seedlings will be planted, lessening crop losses by removing the land from commodity crop production, restoring floodplain hydrology, and restoring critical wildlife habitat.

Mr. Norton said that the NRCS and others are working on development of a cooperative agreement with the Louisiana Office of Forestry so that they may help in delivering technical assistance to forest landowners in the state. Lastly, Mr. Norton said that they are actively obligating available funds through the current Farm Bill programs, but payments will not begin until after August 1, 2009 due to software issues which are being resolved. He also said that there have been indications that the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) may soon be ready for roll-out, but with only three months remaining in the current Fiscal Year, there may not be adequate time to review CSP rules and to begin receiving and processing applications. He said that nonetheless, the NRCS will be vigilant in preparing to administer the CSP as soon as the program rules are available.

Mr. Norton said this concluded his report.

Correspondence

Chairman Guillory asked Mr. Spicer to review the several items under Correspondence.

Mr. Spicer said the first item is an email from NACD regarding providing input to the NRCS during their assessment of the Soil and Water Resource Conservation Act. He said the NRCS will hold three listening sessions in conjunction with NACD sponsored meetings and will include the NACD Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. on July 20, 2009. Mr. Spicer said the NRCS is focusing on three specific questions at these meetings. He said they want participant's opinions on:

- The most important natural resource concerns on private lands today and in the coming decade
- Effectiveness of current conservation program approaches (e.g., technical assistance, cost-share, easements, compliance, research, land retirement, locally led conservation) in addressing priority resource concerns
- Alternative program approaches (e.g., environmental service markets, tax credits) to address resource issues

He said these meetings will give many conservation leaders an opportunity to have direct input into the appraisal of our resource needs throughout the country.

Mr. Spicer said the next item is a memo from Commissioner Strain announcing a new grant program being administered by LDAF. He said the program is designed to fund projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops such as fruits, vegetables and nuts. Mr. Spicer said there is \$337,000 available to the state producers and that the deadline for applying for the grant is July 24, 2009.

Mr. Spicer said the last items are letters that Commissioner Strain sent to Senators Vitter and Landrieu concerning S. 787 referred to as the "Clean Water Restoration Act (CWA)" that is currently being considered by congress. He said the legislation would remove "navigable" from the definitions of waters in the CWA. He said the major concern regarding this legislative change is that it would likely allow for new and broad federal authorities relative to federal waters, state waters and waters on private lands. Mr. Spicer said if this change is made to CWA many Louisiana, Arkansas and Mississippi farmers could be required to obtain 404 permits to farm their hydric soils. Mr. Spicer asked if there were any questions and if not, that concluded correspondence.

District Supervisor Elections

Chairman Guillory said the next agenda item is the 2009 Supervisors Election and he asked Mr. Mr. Spicer to make the election report.

Mr. Spicer said the Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD and the Vermilion SWCD held supervisor elections on Saturday, June 13, 2009

Mr. Spicer said the Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD had two candidates in the election to fill a vacant position on the board. He said Mr. Jerome Cantrelle was the election winner, pending State Commission approval. Mr. Spicer said that Mr. Cantrelle received fifty-five votes and Mr. Corey Thibodeaux received seventeen votes.

Mr. Spicer said the Vermilion SWCD had three candidates on the ballot for election to fill a vacant position on the board. He said Mr. Dale Vidrine was the election winner, pending State Commission approval. Mr. Spicer said that Mr. Vidrine received eighty-six votes, Mr. William Husband received forty-eight votes and Mr. Emile Thibodeaux received ten votes.

Dr. Girouard said this was a tremendous learning experience for the district and for the persons coming to vote at the local library. He said it was a very enjoyable due to the poll workers who helped make the election such an enjoyable experience.

Motion: Dr. Girouard made a motion for the State Commission to approve Mr. Jerome Cantrell the winner of the Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD election and Mr. Dale Vidrine the winner of the Vermilion SWCD election. The motion was seconded by Mr. Colvin and passed unanimously.

RESOLVED, Mr. Jerome Cantrelle is the winner of the Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD election and Mr. Dale Vidrine is the winner of the Vermilion SWCD election. Their terms will begin in July 1, 2009 and expire on June 30, 2012.

Resignation/Appointments and Reappointments

Chairman Guillory asked Mr. Spicer report on the supervisor resignations and appointments.

Mr. Spicer said there were no supervisor resignations to report this month.

Mr. Spicer said the respective conservation districts are requesting the State Commission to appoint the following supervisors to a new term in office:

Plaquemines SWCD, Ms. Nancy Dupont appointed to fill expired elected position of Mr. Edward Martin. Term will begin June 23, 2009 and expire on June 30, 2012.

Red River SWCD, Mr. Odra F. White reappointed to fill his expired appointed position. Term will begin August 30, 2009 and expire on August 30, 2012.

Motion: Dr. Vitrano made a motion to approve the appointments of supervisors Ms. Nancy Dupont, elected position, Plaquemines SWCD and Mr. Odra F. White, appointed position, Red River SWCD. The motion was seconded by Mr. Fletcher and passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Guillory asked if there was any other business to come before the Commission and there was none.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Guillory said the next Commission Meeting is scheduled for July 28, 2009, but Mr. Spicer asked the Commission to change the July 28 meeting date because he had to attend a Louisiana Groundwater Commission Meeting in Ruston on that date. Chairman Guillory said it is the consensus of the Commission to change the next Commission meeting to 1:15 PM on Wednesday, July 29, in the Veterans Auditorium of LDAF, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Guillory asked if there was any other business or comments. None replied.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Guillory said if there was no other business that he will accept a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Mr. Colvin made a motion to adjourn at 1:59 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Yerger and passed unanimously.

/s/ George Guillory_____

George Guillory, Chairman